اِنَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ يَهْدِيْ لِلَّتِيْ هِيَ اَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا كَبِيْرًا

Quran English Translation and Tafseer
Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi

Surah – 63 Al-Munafiqun (The Hypocrites)

سُوْرَةُ الْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ مَدَنِيَّةٌ

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

(In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate)

اِذَا جَآءَكَ الْمُنٰفِقُوْنَ قَالُوْا نَشْهَدُ اِنَّكَ لَرَسُوْلُ اللّٰهِ وَاللّٰهُ يَعْلَمُ اِنَّكَ لَرَسُوْلُهٗ وَاللّٰهُ يَشْهَدُ اِنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ لَكٰذِبُوْنَ ۝

(63:1) (O Prophet), when the hypocrites come to you, they say: “We bear witness that you are certainly Allah's Messenger.” Allah certainly knows that you are His Messenger. But Allah also bears witness that the hypocrites are utter liars! (1)

(1) That is, Although the thing they are uttering with the tongue is true by itself, it does not reflect their belief. Therefore they lie when they say that they bear witness that you are a Messenger (peace be upon him) of Allah. Here, one should clearly understand that an evidence or witness is composed of two things: first, the actual thing to which one bears the witness; second, the concerned person’s own belief about the thing to which he bears the witness, Now, if the thing by itself is true and the belief of the bearer of witness also corresponds to what he says, he will be truthful in every respect. And if the thing in itself is false; but the bearer of the witness believes it to be right and true, he will be regarded as truthful in one way, for he is truthful in expressing his belief, and liar in another way, for the thing he is bearing witness to is by itself false. Contrary to this, if the thing by itself is true but the belief of the bearer of the witness is opposed to it, he will be regarded as truthful because he is testifying to the right thing, and a liar because his own belief is contrary to what he is saying with the tongue. For instance, if a believer states that Islam is a true religion, he is truthful in every respect, but if a Jew, while he is steadfast in his Judaism, states the same thing, he would be stating the right thing but his evidence would be regarded as false, for he is testifying against his faith and belief. And if he calls

it a false religion, he would be uttering a false thing but he would be bearing a true witness according to his belief.

اِتَّخَذُوۡۤا اَيۡمَانَهُمۡ جُنَّةً فَصَدُّوۡا عَنۡ سَبِيۡلِ اللّٰهِ ؕ اِنَّهُمۡ سَآءَ مَا كَانُوۡا يَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ۝٢

(63:2) They shelter behind their oath, (2) and thus hinder their own selves and others from the Path of Allah. (3) Evil indeed is what they do.

(2) That is, they use the oaths that they swear to convince others of their Islam and faith as a shield to save themselves from the wrath of the Muslims so that they do not treat them as they treat their open enemies.

These oaths may imply the oaths which they usually swear to convince others of their faith as well as those which they swore when they were caught committing some hypocritical act, and also those oaths which Abdullah bin Ubayy had sworn to contradict the report given by Zaid bin Arqam. Besides these, there is another probability that Allah might have regarded this statement of theirs as an oath: We bear witness that you are Allah’s Messenger. This last probability has given rise to a dispute among the jurists, namely: If a person states something with the words: I bear witness, will it be regarded as an oath or not? Imam Abu Hanifah and his companions (except Imam Zufar), Imam Sufyan Thauri and Imam Auzai regard it as an oath (Yamin in the Shariah terminology). Imam Zufar says that it is not an oath. Two sayings from Imam Malik have been reported in this connection: First, that it is an oath absolutely, and second, that if while saying: I bear witness, his intention was to say: My God, I bear witness, or I bear witness before God, it would be a statement on oath, otherwise not. Imam Shafei says: Even if the person says the words: I bear witness before God. it would not be a statement made on oath, unless he uttered these words with the intention of swearing an oath, (Al-Jassas, Ahkam al- Quran; Ibn al-Arabi, Ahkam al-Quran).

(3) The verb sadd in Arabic is transitive as well as intransitive. Therefore, saddu-un sabil-Allah means; They turn away from the way of Allah, as well as: they turn others away from the way of Allah. According to the first meaning the verse would mean: By means of these oaths, they first plant themselves firmly among the Muslims and then invent ways to escape fulfilling demands of the faith and to avoid obedience to Allah and His Messenger. According to the second meaning it would mean: They use their false oaths as a cover for committing evil deeds. Posing as Muslims they weaken the Muslim community from within: find out the secrets of the Muslims and convey these to their enemies: create doubts about Islam among the non-Muslims and use such devices for inspiring the simple Muslims with evil suggestions which only a hypocrite in the guise of a Muslim could do, for an open enemy of Islam cannot use them.

ذٰلِكَ بِاَنَّهُمْ اٰمَنُوْا ثُمَّ كَفَرُوْا فَطُبِعَ عَلٰى قُلُوْبِهِمْ فَهُمْ لَا يَفْقَهُوْنَ ﴿٣﴾

(63:3) All that is because they first believed and then disbelieved, and therefore a seal was set on their hearts; as a result they understand nothing. (4)

(4) In this verse believing means professing the faith in order to be counted among Muslims, and disbelieving means not to believe sincerely and to persist in disbelief as usual. The verse means to say that when they, after due thought, decided to adopt this hypocritical attitude instead of adopting either belief or disbelief plainly, Allah caused a seal to be set on their hearts and deprived them of the grace to adopt the attitude and conduct of a true, sincere and noble person. Now, their power of understanding has been lost, their moral sense has become dead, and while following this way they never even feel that their habit of always telling lies, their deceitful behavior and the ever present contradictions between their word and deed is a wretched state in which they have involved themselves.

This is one of those verses in which the meaning of “causing a seal to be set on the heart of somebody by Allah” has been made clear. These people did not become hypocrites because

Allah had set a seal on their hearts; so faith did not enter them, and they became hypocrites under compulsion. But, in fact, Allah set a seal on their hearts only when they decided to persist in disbelief in spite of professing the faith outwardly. Then, they were deprived of the capacity to believe sincerely and of the grace of the moral attitude resulting from it, and were helped to persist in the hypocrisy and hypocritical morals, which they had chosen to adopt for themselves.

وَاِذَا رَاَيۡتَهُمۡ تُعۡجِبُكَ اَجۡسَامُهُمۡ ؕ وَاِنۡ يَّقُوۡلُوۡا تَسۡمَعۡ لِقَوۡلِهِمۡ ؕ
كَاَنَّهُمۡ خُشُبٌ مُّسَنَّدَةٌ ؕ يَحۡسَبُوۡنَ كُلَّ صَيۡحَةٍ عَلَيۡهِمۡ ؕ هُمُ الۡعَدُوُّ فَاحۡذَرۡهُمۡ ؕ قٰتَلَهُمُ اللّٰهُ ۚ اَنّٰى
يُؤۡفَكُوۡنَ ۴

(63:4) When you look at them, their persons are pleasing, and when they speak, you pay heed to what they say. (5) But in truth they are (merely) beams of timber propped-up (against a wall). (6) They consider every shout they hear to be directed against them. (7) They are your utter enemies; (8) guard against them. (9) May Allah do away with them! (10) How are they being turned away (from the Truth)? (11)

(5) Abdullah bin Abbas has stated that Abdullah bin Ubayy was a strongly built, healthy, handsome and smooth tongued person, and the same was the case with most of his companions. They were all the nobles of Al-Madinah. When they came to sit in the Prophet’s (peace be upon him) assembly, they would sit reclining on cushions against the walls and would talk agreeably and convincingly. From their outward appearance and manner of speech no one could imagine that those honorable people of the city would be so wretched and degraded in their character.

(6) That is, those who sit reclining on cushions against the walls, are not but but pieces of timber. Comparing them to timber is meant to imply that they are devoid of the moral sense which is the essence of humanity. Then by comparing them to blocks of timber propped up against the wall, it has also been pointed out that they are absolutely worthless, for the timber would be useful only when it has been utilized in making of a ceiling, or a door

frame, or a piece of furniture. A block of timber that has just been placed against a wall serves no useful purpose at all.

(7) This brief sentence portrays the state of their guilty conscience. Since they fully knew what game of hypocrisy they were playing under the screen of their superficial faith, they always remained in a state of alarm, thinking as to when the secret of their treason might be exposed, or the believers might feel disgusted with their evil deeds and machinations and take them to task for them. If ever a cry was raised anywhere in the city, or a noise was heard; they immediately grew alarmed and thought it was directed against themselves.

(8) In other words, these hidden enemies are more dangerous than the open enemies.

(9) That is, do not be deceived by their outward appearances. Beware of them, for they can deceive you at any moment.

(10) This is not a curse but a declaration of the verdict about them by Allah that they have become worthy of His punishment and He will certainly inflict His punishment on them. It is also possible that Allah may not have used these words in their literal sense but in the meaning of a curse and condemnation according to Arabic idiom.

(11) It has not been pointed out as to who perverts them from belief to hypocrisy. This by itself makes it clear that there is not one but many factors responsible for their perversion. There is Satan, there are their evil friends, and there are their own selfish motives. Someone’s wife or children become his motive, and someone is driven to perversion by the evil ones in his society, or by jealousy, spite and pride.

وَ اِذَا قِ لَ لَهُم تَعَالَو ا يَستَغ فِر لَكُم رَسُ لُ اللّٖ لَوَّو ا رُءُ وسَهُم وَ
رَاَ يتَهُم يَصُدُّ ونَ وَ هُم مُّستَكبِرُ ونَ ۝٥

(63:5) When it is said to them: “Come, Allah's Messenger will seek forgiveness for you,” they (contemptuously) shake their heads and you see them holding back in pride. (12)

(12) That is, they not only refuse to come to the Messenger to seek forgiveness, but also on hearing the invitation they shake their heads with arrogance and pride, and remain adamant, thinking that it would be disgraceful for them to approach the Messenger (peace be upon him) to seek forgiveness. This is a clear sign that they are not believers.

سَوَآءٌ عَلَيۡهِمۡ اَسۡتَغۡفَرۡتَ لَهُمۡ اَمۡ لَمۡ تَسۡتَغۡفِرۡ لَهُمۡ ؕ لَنۡ يَّغۡفِرَ اللّٰهُ لَهُمۡ ؕ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ لَا يَهۡدِى
الۡقَوۡمَ الۡفٰسِقِيۡنَ ۶

(63:6) It is all the same for them whether you ask forgiveness for them or not; for Allah shall never forgive them. (13) Surely Allah does not direct the transgressing folk to the Right Way. (14)

(13) This thing was reiterated in Surah At-Taubah, which was revealed three years after Surah Al-Munafiqun, even in stronger words. In that Surah, Allah, while addressing the Prophet (peace be upon him) said this about the hypocrites: O Prophet (it will be all the same) whether you beg forgiveness for them or not, for Allah will not forgive them even if you beg forgiveness for them seventy times. This is because they have disbelieved in Allah and His Messenger, and Allah does not show guidance to the wrongdoers. (Surah At-Taubah, Ayat 80). A little further on in that Surah it was again said: And never perform the funeral prayer for anyone of them who dies nor stand at his grave, for they have denied Allah and His Messenger (peace be upon him) and died while they were transgressors. (Surah At-Taubah, Ayat 84).

(14) Two things have been stated in this verse. First, that the prayer of forgiveness can be beneficial only for those who are guided aright. Let alone a common man, even if Allah’s Messenger (peace be upon him) himself prays for the forgiveness of the person, who has turned away from guidance and adopted the way of sin and transgression instead of obedience, he cannot be forgiven. Second, that it is not Allah’s way to bless with guidance those who do not seek His guidance. If a person himself turns away from Allah’s guidance, rather shakes his head with arrogance and rejects the invitation when he is called towards guidance, Allah has no need that He should go after him with His guidance and implore him to come to the right path.

هُمُ الَّذِيْنَ يَقُوْلُوْنَ لَا تُنْفِقُوْا عَلٰى مَنْ عِنْدَ رَسُوْلِ اللّٰهِ حَتّٰى يَنْفَضُّوْا ؕ وَلِلّٰهِ خَزَآئِنُ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَلٰكِنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ لَا يَفْقَهُوْنَ ۝٧

(63:7) It is they who say: “Give nothing to those who are with the Messenger of Allah so that they may disperse.” (They say so although) the treasures of the heavens and the earth belong to Allah. But the hypocrites do not understand.

يَقُوْلُوْنَ لَئِنْ رَّجَعْنَاۤ اِلَى الْمَدِيْنَةِ لَيُخْرِجَنَّ الْاَعَزُّ مِنْهَا الْاَذَلَّ ؕ وَلِلّٰهِ الْعِزَّةُ وَلِرَسُوْلِهٖ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ وَلٰكِنَّ الْمُنٰفِقِيْنَ لَا يَعْلَمُوْنَ ۝٨

(63:8) They say: “When we return to Madinah, the honourable ones will drive out from it those that are abject.” (15) In truth, all honour belongs to Allah, and to His Messenger, and to the believers. (16) But the hypocrites do not know.

(15) Zaid bin Arqam says: When I reported these words of Abdullah bin Ubayy to the Prophet (peace be upon him), and Abdullah bin Ubayy came and disowned them on oath, the elderly people of the Ansar, and even my own uncle, reproved me for this; so much so that I felt that the Prophet (peace be upon him) had also mistaken me for a liar and Abdullah bin Ubayy for a truthful person. This caused me great anguish and grief. Then, when these verses were revealed, the Prophet (peace be upon him) called me, and taking hold of my ear, said: The boy’s ear was truthful Allah has himself testified to what it had heard. (Ibn Jarir. In Tirmidhi also there is a tradition on the same subject).

(16) That is, all honor belongs to Allah in virtue of His essence, to the Prophet (peace be upon him) in virtue of his prophethood, and to the believers in virtue of their faith. As for the disbelievers, the wicked people and the hypocrites, they have no share whatsoever in the real true honor.

يٰۤاَيُّهَا الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا لَا تُلْهِكُمْ اَمْوَالُكُمْ وَلَاۤ اَوْلَادُكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللّٰهِ ۚ وَمَنْ يَّفْعَلْ ذٰلِكَ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْخٰسِرُوْنَ ۝٩

(63:9) Believers, [17] let your possessions and your offspring not make you negligent of Allah's remembrance. [18] For whoso does that, they will be the losers.

(17) Now a word of admonition is being addressed to all those people who have entered Islam, whether they are true and sincere believers, or those who profess the faith merely verbally. As we have explained at several places above. the words alla-dhina amanu in the Quran are sometimes used to address the true believers and sometimes to address the hypocrites, for they profess the faith only with the tongue, and sometimes to address the Muslims of all kinds in general. The context itself shows which group is the audience at a particular place.

(18) The mention of the possessions and the children, in particular, has been made for man mostly turns away from the demands of the faith for the sake of their well being and interests and becomes involved in hypocrisy, weakness of faith, or wickedness and disobedience; otherwise it implies everything of the world that allures and absorbs man so completely that he becomes heedless of the remembrance of God. This heedlessness in respect of the remembrance of God is indeed the root cause of all evil. If man only remembers that he is not free but the servant of One God, and that God is fully aware of all his actions and deeds, and he will be held accountable one day before Him for all his actions and deeds, he would never be involved in any deviation and wickedness, and if ever he commits an error due to a human weakness, he will immediately rectify it as soon as he comes to realize his wrongdoing and repent.

وَ اَ نۡفِقُوۡا مِنۡ مَّا رَزَقۡنٰكُمۡ مِّنۡ قَبۡلِ اَنۡ يَّاۡتِىَ اَحَدَكُمُ الۡمَوۡتُ فَيَقُوۡلَ رَبِّ لَوۡلَاۤ اَخَّرۡتَنِىۡۤ اِلٰۤى اَجَلٍ قَرِيۡبٍ فَاَصَّدَّقَ وَ اَكُنۡ مِّنَ الصّٰلِحِيۡنَ ﴿۱۰﴾

(63:10) And spend of what Allah has granted you by way of sustenance before death should come to any of you and he should say: “Lord, why did You not defer my return for a while so that I might give alms and be among the righteous?”

وَلَنۡ يُّؤَخِّرَ اللّٰهُ نَفۡسًا اِذَا جَآءَ اَجَلُهَا ؕ وَ اللّٰهُ خَبِيۡرٌۢ بِمَا تَعۡمَلُوۡنَ ﴿۱۱﴾

(63:11) But when a person's term comes to an end, Allah never grants any respite. Allah is well aware of all that you do.